Frank Lowe Quartet – Out Loud (2014)

A1 Untitled 1 11:13 A2 Vivid Description 8:04 B1 Listen 2:33 B2 Untitled 2 12:35 B3 Logical Extensions 0:41 C1 Whew! 23:18 D1 Untitled 3 23:53 Acoustic Bass – William Parker Drums – Steve Reid Tenor Saxophone, Soprano Saxophone, Percussion, Instruments [Small] – Frank Lowe Trombone, Percussion – Joseph Bowie Trumpet – Ahmed Abdullah (tracks: D1 only)

Musical archeology has become somewhat of a trend these days. It might be explained, in part by the rebirth of vinyl and the excavation of long out-of-print titles, but also there are scores of devoted collectors who've discovered unpublished recordings of significant artists. For the serially neglected avant-garde of jazz, some of these finds have been significant. Albert Ayler's Holy Ghost: Rare And Unissued Recordings (1962-70) (Revenant, 2004) box set and the more recent Centering: Unreleased Early Recordings 1976-1987 (No Business, 2012) that documents the early work of bassist William Parker, come to mind.

Out Loud a well preserved artifact from the early career of saxophonist Frank Lowe, adds to that list. These two LPs, released in a limited edition of 550 hand-numbered copies come with a 38-page booklet of unpublished photographs, a detailed biography of Lowe, and a technical analysis by saxophonist J.D. Parran. More importantly, the music is mastered by Joe Lizzi and Ben Young to sound fresh and vibrantly uncontaminated. The sounds are pressed on heavy vinyl and are accompanied by a 40-minute video link to the RivBea loft performance.

Lowe in 1974, was preparing a follow-up to his debut Black Beings (ESP, 1973) and he assembled this quartet of trombonist Joseph Bowie, bassist William Parker, and drummer Steve Reid. Plans changed, I suspect by a producer, and the music, this suite "Act Of Freedom," was shelved for two covers of Thelonious Monk's music and three originals. Fresh kept Bowie but replaced Reid with Bobo Shaw (except for one track), added trumpeter Lester Bowie and

swapped cellist Abdul Wadud for Parker.

The music heard on these two dates, the first from Rashied Ali's Survival Studio on Greene Street and the second at Sam Rivers's Bond Street Studio RivBea loft, is a distillation of times in cross-section. Lowe, born in Memphis, joined Sun Ra's band after Vietnam, then, inspired by Ornette Coleman in New York, joined bands led by Alice Coltrane, Milford Graves, Rashied Ali and Don Cherry. His blues drenched firebrand sound can be heard in today's music by players like Mats Gustafsson, Mars Williams, and Ellery Eskelin.

The Survival Studio date is animated by William Parker's fierce bass lines and the constantly changing drive of Steve Reid's drumming. Lowe brings the sounds of Sun Ra's Arkestra and the AACM's Art Ensemble of Chicago to bear here. His saxophone vocalizations squeeze every last drop of expressiveness for the performance. As might be expected from the times, there is a rough hewn edge here, but the energy new lags. The final side adds trumpeter Ahmed Abdullah to the mix. Like Bowie, he mixes, pokes and spars with Lowe, pressuring the music deeper and deeper. The beauty in this music is that it repeatedly shatters, then congeals. Shatter then congeals. ---Mark Corroto, allaboutjazz.com

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